

December 16, 2015

President of the Dominican Republic Danilo Medina
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

cc: Magistrado Milton Ray Guevara, Presidente del Tribunal Constitucional; Diputado Abel Martínez, Presidente de la Cámara de Diputados; y Senadora Cristina Lizardo, Presidenta del Senado

Dear Presidente of the Dominican Republic Danilo Medina:

We write on behalf of Global Doctors for Choice (GDC), an international network of physicians from a range of specialties committed to improving women's reproductive health and rights. GDC is committed to the defense of human rights and to the provision of high-quality medical care grounded in science. We strive to protect and expand access to comprehensive reproductive health care through advocacy for evidence-based policy and medical research.

We write to express our concern regarding the recent decision by the Dominican Republic's Constitutional Tribunal to overturn last year's penal code reforms. Last year, the Dominican Republic Constitutional Tribunal passed a landmark law that would have legalized abortion in the cases of rape or incest, when doctors deemed a pregnancy was suffering from a disability or illness that would render it "incompatible with life," and/ or a pregnancy would pose a health risk to the women's or girl's health or life. The Dominican Republic's President Danilo Medina advocated for this change and signed it into law. The recent decision to overturn these 2014 reforms ultimately restores the Dominican Republic's original code dating back to 1884 that denies abortion in all circumstances and criminalizes women and girls for seeking abortion.

As doctors, our first duty is always to our patients. We are alarmed that this decision denies women access to safe abortion services. Various international organizations, such as the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health, have expressed their concern regarding the direct relationship between restrictive abortion laws, and the risk to the life, health and well-being of women.

There is consensus among medical, public health and human rights groups that safe abortion is essential to ensure the best possible conditions for women's health and human rights, and there is strong evidence that the prohibition of abortion does not significantly deter the practice, but rather results in women seeking clandestine and unsafe procedures.

As a global group of doctors, we urge you to take all necessary steps to protect the lives

and well-being women in the Dominican Republic and to reverse this recent decision.

Sincerely,

ANA CRISTINA GONZALEZ V.

Dr. Ana Cristina González Vélez
Grupo Médico por el Derecho a Decidir
Bogotá, Colombia

Cristão Rosas -

Dr. Cristiano Rosas
Rede Médica pelo Direito a Decidir
Sao Paulo, Brasil

Alfonso Carrera RP

Dr. Alfonso Carrera
Grupo Médico por una Libre Elección
México DF

John Koku Awoonor-Williams

Dr. John Koku Awoonor-Williams
Grupo Médico por el Derecho a Decidir
Ghana

Wendy Chavkin

Dr. Wendy Chavkin
Columbia University
New York, USA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dick Van der Tak', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

Dick Van der Tak
Director Ejecutivo
Global Doctors for Choice
55 West 39th St
New York, New York 10014
USA